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THE JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW

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LIBERAL JUDAISM¹.

I HAVE undertaken a difficult task, for which I must crave your generous indulgence. I am to speak to you about Liberal Judaism, being myself a Liberal Jew. It might be supposed that it must be easy for such a one to speak about his own faith. But is that really so? In addition to the feeling of responsibility which comes over me, there is something else. Not long ago I had to review an excellent book on Judaism written by two clergymen of the Church of England. It was an excellent book, but like most books it was not without defects. And the thought struck me how difficult it was for any one to write or speak about living religious systems. For if you are an outsider, you lack that intimate knowledge and sympathy which can only come to those that are within; whereas if you *are* within, you will almost inevitably lack that impartiality and detachment of mind—that capacity of putting yourself (in all humility) above the facts you are to study—which are imperative necessities for the philosophic historian of religion. To know the pitfalls may be one good way of avoiding them, but I am well aware that I cannot avoid them altogether.

¹ A lecture delivered at the Greenfield Congregational Church, Bradford, on February 12, 1908.

There is a further difficulty as regards Liberal Judaism which also, though somewhat reluctantly, I am bound to mention to you at the outset. I have to speak of a religion, or of a phase of a religion, which is little organized in this country, or even in Europe. It can hardly be said to possess much outward embodiment or systematic organization. In the United States of America things are different. There, Liberal Judaism is more of a concrete and visible reality ; it is an important section of Judaism, more important and powerful indeed, I think it may be said, than any other. But in England and Europe, owing to many different causes, Liberal Judaism is rather the religion of individuals, and of a few scattered synagogues and societies, here and there, than an organized and powerful section of the synagogue as a whole. Yet beneath the surface things are different, and there are many who are Liberal Jews at heart yet keep silence and go their own way.

Another preliminary remark I want to make is, that I use the word "Liberal" in a purely technical sense, just as it is used in a purely technical sense in politics. I might also use the word Reform, and some people prefer it. They speak of Reform Judaism, which has the objection that a noun has to do duty as an adjective ; or of Reformed Judaism, which always sounds to me queer, from the frequent association of *that* participle with drunkards and such like. But the word—Liberal or Reform—is of minor importance ; and for my part I will keep to Liberal, with the proviso I have already indicated. I do not for a moment mean that Liberal Jews are more generous than "orthodox" or "traditional" Jews, or even that they are necessarily more tolerant or wide-minded. An illiberal Liberal Jew is well within the range of possibility. I think I know him in the flesh.

As, then, the adjective in the term Liberal Judaism is to be used in a purely technical sense, you will at once ask me to define that sense more clearly. What do I mean ? What is Liberal Judaism ? Who are the Liberal Jews ?

Well, that is the question which I have been brought here to answer.

It may, then, at this point be desirable to indicate very briefly some of the main doctrines as to which Liberal and traditional or orthodox Judaism agree, and some of those wherein they differ. It would, I think, be conceded on all hands, that they agree in the stress which both lay upon rigid monotheism and the strenuously Unitarian conception of God. Perhaps, too, it might be added that though neither section of Judaism needs to, or does, refrain from teaching the immanence of God, yet the divine transcendence is a marked feature with both. We all—religions, like persons—have the defects of our qualities, and perhaps an occasional defect of the Jewish conception of God is a certain crudity in the apprehension of the divine personality. For in Liberal, no less than in orthodox Judaism, God has, as it were, to do double and treble duty. He has to be, if I may so express it, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at one and the same time and in one and the same Unity. The religious feelings towards a divine Person which, in some forms of Christianity at any rate, are lavished upon the Christ, are in Judaism concentrated upon the divine Father. In the words of a familiar Jewish hymn, he is our King, our Lord, our Saviour, and our God.

Then, again, orthodox and Liberal Judaism are essentially at one in the doctrine of the sanctification of life; I mean, the doctrine that the crude material of life, its appetites, and desires, as well as its higher activities, must be religionized. Man is to serve God always and everywhere; but he is to serve him in the world and not out of it. Work and play, and even the animal instincts—eating, drinking, and the sexual passion—are to be guided and controlled by religion. The eye that offends is not to be torn out; it is to be tamed and sanctified. Thus temperance and self-control, rather than abstinence and asceticism, are prevailing features of Jewish morality as of Jewish religion.

It might, perhaps, be even said that Liberal and orthodox Judaism are agreed in the high place which they assign to the conception of Law. The old Rabbinic maxim ran: "There is no freedom except through the Law." And Liberal Judaism would echo the sentiment, though it would not be thinking here of the Law of the Pentateuch, but of the moral law as an ideal and as a whole, in voluntary subjection to which man finds his freedom.

Again, Liberal and orthodox Judaism are agreed in a certain indomitable optimism. They both hold that it is God who rules the world, and that in spite of much inexplicable evil and many frequent setbacks, it is, nevertheless, a good and improving world over which he rules. Men move forward to a fuller knowledge of God and of his works; they advance to a deeper conception and a higher practice of righteousness. This is the essence of the Messianic idea in both sections of Judaism. Agreement here is of much greater importance than a divergence as regards the personal Messiah. And if liberalism and orthodoxy are agreed in their faith as to the tendency of the future upon earth, they are also agreed as to the future of the individual soul. For both teach the doctrine of immortality. And modern Jewish orthodoxy is, I fancy, at one with Liberal Judaism in clinging to the doctrine of universalism. A loving God now seems to both utterly incongruous with the thought of a single soul excluded from ultimate salvation. Both, again, hold to the supremacy of conduct rather than belief. They do not deny that faith may determine conduct, but they cannot conceive a righteous God as one who does not put moral goodness above theological dogma. The righteous shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, be their religious labels what they may—be they Churchmen or Dissenters, Christians or Jews. If you press the simple orthodox or the simple Liberal Jew for a misleading formula, he will tell you that he prefers to inscribe his flag with 'justification by works', rather

than with "justification by faith". If he is less simple, he will avoid the trap, but in any case his meaning will be something like what I have just said.

Both Liberal and orthodox Judaism agree in the rejection of "Original Sin" and of the doctrine of the Fall. They agree in holding that God punishes and rewards, but I fancy that they would both also agree in a mainly spiritual interpretation of this fundamental principle.

Perhaps you might say that, so far, in their agreements, not one has been mentioned which might not be held by some Unitarian or Theist. If this be so, the Liberal and the orthodox Jew would both rejoice that their doctrines have spread abroad, but last in my catalogue of agreements I will mention one of a markedly and specifically Jewish colour. It is the common belief in the religious mission of Israel; the belief that Judaism and the Jews had not concluded their divinely appointed task at the birth of Jesus, but that this task or mission continued and still continues. In the interpretation and consequences of that task or mission, differences might appear, but as to the doctrine itself there is agreement.

The disagreements between liberalism and orthodoxy are mainly concentrated upon the Hebrew Bible in general and upon the Pentateuch in particular.

So far as I understand the situation, orthodox Judaism is inseparably connected with the dogma of the Mosaic authorship, divine perfection, and immutability of the Pentateuchal Law. Directly this dogma is denied, I have never had it explained to me how orthodox Judaism, as a system of religious belief, can possibly survive. There is no resting-place—no rainproof and habitable half-way house—between orthodoxy and liberalism. Either the Law is Mosaic, divine in every ordinance, and immutable, or it is not. Orthodox Judaism, in sad defiance of historical investigation, of comparative religion, of Biblical criticism, says, and must say, one thing; Liberal Judaism, in harmony with historical investigation, comparative religion, biblical

criticism, and, I might add, the dictates of an unprejudiced and enlightened ethical teaching, says the other. The doctrine of the supremacy, Mosaic origin, and immutability of the Pentateuch is rigidly and clearly laid down in the seventh, eighth, and ninth articles of the orthodox Jewish creed, formulated by Maimonides in the twelfth century A.D., and found in many orthodox Jewish prayer-books. This difference between the two sections of Judaism cannot be bridged over. The other differences lie almost all in the same plane. Orthodox and Liberal Judaism differ as regards the theory of inspiration, the historical character of the biblical miracles, and the human and divine element in prophecy. The differences here would roughly correspond with the conception of the Bible held by an evangelical Christian of the old school and that held by a liberal or progressive Christian of to-day. Again, orthodox Judaism is theoretically bound to the divine inspiration and binding character of a large portion of the Rabbinic Law, whereas Liberal Judaism, if it is critical and free towards the Pentateuch and the Bible, is still more critical and more free towards the Mishnah and the Talmud. Moreover, the deductions and differences in practical life and in public worship are as important as the differences of theory upon which they rest. But of these deductions there is no time to speak here. Suffice it to say, that Liberal Judaism, while holding strongly to the divine element in the Bible and in the development of human righteousness and knowledge, while desirous of maintaining its links and connexion with the historic past, deems itself free to mould and remodel ceremonial and outward religious institutions in accordance with progressive conceptions of religion and morality, and with the living requirements of the environment and the age.

It will thus be seen that, roughly speaking, I mean by Liberal Judaism that section of Judaism which corresponds with the Broad Church party in the Anglican Church, or, to use a more modern parallel, with the New Theology party

in Christianity. Or again, we may say that the Liberal Jews are the Modernists of the Jewish Church.

But a good deal has to be added to this rough parallel by way of explanation and qualification. The breath of modernism, of free inquiry, of criticism, falls upon the different religions and affects them in different ways. They have different tender spots: the delicate points, the difficulties, the troubles of one are not the same as those of another. The dogmas of one creed are more susceptible to the cold and mordant air of the Higher Criticism than the dogmas of another. In Judaism, reform or liberalism did not come in a purely theological way. It came, at least in large part, as an effort to adapt the religion to a new environment, though the effort had, as we shall see, theological implications and consequences. Moreover, it arose in Germany, where the religious and theological conditions are different from those which obtain in our own country, and where they were still more different in the thirties, forties, and fifties of the last century.

On the other hand, Judaism, at least ever since the period of emancipation, has been powerfully affected by what is going on in the bigger world around it. No movement such as the present day New Theology or modernist movement can possibly leave it unaffected. Liberal Judaism has partly to be accounted for and explained by purely Jewish considerations, but partly it is a reflexion or Jewish counterpart of a general movement in the larger Christian world amid which the Jews are living. I hope to make my meaning clearer as I proceed. I am afraid to use more definite words, or to distinguish each factor of the movement more markedly, because otherwise you might be led to suppose that the Liberal movement in Judaism is, at least partially, a sort of poor imitation, ungenueine, temporary, parasitic, unimportant, and unreal. If you were to think that, or if you were to let any of my orthodox Jewish friends—traditionalists, advocates of historic Judaism, or whatever else they like

to call themselves—make you to believe that, if you were to suppose that there is no room or chance in Judaism, whatever there may be in Christianity, for modernism or “new theology,” you would, I am absolutely sure, be making a very considerable mistake.

And now, just when you thought, and had a reason to expect, that I was going to get to grips with my subject—one hates a fellow to keep shivering on the brink of his plunge—I am bound to make a tiresome diversion. But here is my trouble. How am I to speak about Liberal Judaism if I say nothing about Judaism without the “liberal”? Liberal Judaism is a phase of Judaism. But what is Judaism? May I assume that everybody in this chapel could give me a full and accurate answer? I want to be very respectful to my audience; I think it is very nice of them that they have been interested enough to come to hear me at all, but I fear I must not make too large an assumption as to their knowledge of what is, after all, for most people a rather remote and out-of-the-way sort of religion. I am sometimes rather surprised by the odd questions people put to me about Judaism and the Jews. For instance, I have often been asked, Do Jews have any belief in a future life?—a question that certainly betrays a good deal of delightful ignorance. Clearly, if I say to you much about Judaism in general, little time will be left in which to speak of Liberal Judaism in particular; yet there are one or two things which I must say, because they closely bear upon Liberal Judaism and will indicate to you its starting-points, and where it is that the Liberalism or modernism comes in. But please understand me. My “one or two things” will not touch on the permanent core or deeper truths of the Jewish religion, but rather upon its difficulties and antinomies. Every religion, I think, has some of these. If I allude to a few Jewish ones, I am sure you will be generous enough to believe that the Jewish religion is not made up of them, and that though, for our purposes this evening, we may push them

into the front, their position in the total picture—their proportion in the religion as a whole—would be smaller and different. But this also I will ask you to believe, namely, that we Liberal Jews are keener on our noun than on our adjective. We should not care for Liberal Judaism much if we did not care for Judaism more. What unites us with all other Jews is, as we think, at bottom more important, essential, and profound than what separates us. The essence of our faith lies in the noun rather than in the adjective. The purpose of the adjective is to purify, enlarge, and set off, the truths and excellences of the noun.

So now, with that caution or qualification, I pass to my one or two things about Judaism as a whole.

Judaism has been called a national and a legal religion, in opposition and contrast (not, I fear, to its advantage,) to those religions which, like Buddhism or Christianity, are called universal and redemptive religions.

I do not entirely accept this classification, and I do not wholly accept the consequences and deductions which are commonly drawn from it. But there is clearly *some* truth in it. It would be utterly ridiculous to say that Judaism has nothing to do with a particular nation, people or race, or that it has nothing to do with Law and a particular Law.

I purpose, then, to draw out each term of the classification rather more fully, for both points, the national point and the legal point, touch Liberal Judaism, in its origin and development, closely and significantly.

First then, Judaism is a national religion. What does this mean? It does not mean that the God of Judaism is only the God of the Jews, and not also regarded by the Jews as the God of the whole world. It does not mean that the God of Judaism is a partial God, who weighs the Jews with one pair of scales and the Gentiles with another. Nor does it even mean that Judaism has no interest in mankind outside its own narrow borders, and no desires and hopes in respect to them except that the oppressors of Israel may be destroyed. Of *modern* orthodox and tradi-

tional Judaism it would be wholly false, I think, to predicate "national" in any immoral or irreligious sense such as this. Even of Rabbinic Judaism such statements would not be true without many reserves and qualifications. But of modern Judaism it is only right and fair that I should emphasize the fact that orthodoxy and liberalism are in these important respects at one. From no Western educated orthodox Jewish pulpit would you hear any statement which would make you regard Judaism as a national religion in the sense of believing in or teaching a partial, in other words an immoral, God. On the contrary. The election of Israel is interpreted ethically and religiously. The superb but terrible utterance of Amos is not forgotten. "You only have I known out of all the families of the earth; *therefore* will I visit upon you your iniquities." And stress is laid upon the doctrine—asserted to be an essentially Jewish one—that conduct and not belief is the passport to eternal salvation. "The righteous among all nations," so we are told with remorseless iteration, "shall have a share in the world to come."

But modern Judaism is national in the sense that its adherents do, as a matter of fact, belong almost exclusively to one particular race; it is, moreover, now a non-proselytizing religion, and orthodox Judaism rather boasts that it is so. And lastly—the most important point of all—it is a national religion in that a large portion of its outward embodiment, its rites, ceremonies, customs, and observances, are still national or at least racial—if that ugly word may be allowed me—and, according to the orthodox theory, they are exclusively intended for the enjoyment, discipline, sanctification, and satisfaction of the Jewish race and of the Jewish race only. I hardly think that I have put the facts too strongly. Not that a Gentile cannot, according to orthodox Judaism, become a Jew. He can, as it were, be naturalized, as an Englishman can become a German. He then accepts, and agrees to practise, the national or racial customs which are also

religious ordinances and laws. The main dogmas of Judaism, its monotheism, its doctrine of the relation of God to man and of man to God, its moral code, its ethical teaching—these are universal and even deliberately intended for all the world. Its ceremonial, its embodiment, its religious laws and ordinances, are not only national in origin, but also in permanent intention; for these, as orthodox Judaism teaches, are for the Jews alone. This is the antinomy to which I before alluded.

Secondly, Judaism is a legal religion. By an odd concatenation of circumstances it has happened that I, who am not an orthodox or traditional Jew, have had frequently to expound and to defend the orthodox Jewish theory and conception of the Law. This I cannot do again upon the present occasion. It suffices to say that Jewish legalism is not a sort of perverse love of legality and of law as such—of legality and law as opposed to faith and grace—but it is something very much simpler, more plastic, less theoretic. It is just the convinced belief that the Code of the Pentateuch is what it claims to be, the absolutely perfect, inspired, and immutable word, will, and command of the all-wise and all-righteous God. No doubt orthodox and traditional Judaism includes a whole heap of observances and laws which are Rabbinic and Talmudic, but all these rest upon and are developed from the Pentateuch. Undermine or destroy the belief—the passionate and cherished belief—that the Pentateuchal Code is that which it declares itself to be—the perfect law, the abiding expression and will of an all-holy God, and the legalism of orthodox Judaism—the central pillar upon which it rests—is overthrown and laid prostrate. The fabric comes toppling to the ground.

Now Liberal Judaism started from, and is still closely connected with, these two main characteristics of orthodox or traditional Judaism. It took its rise, so to speak, from the place where the orthodox shoe pinched. To use another phrase, it was the national and the legal elements or diffi-

culties in orthodox Judaism which paved the way for Liberal Judaism.

But here I must point out that it was not theological or critical considerations which started the movement. These followed on and helped it, but they did not set the ball rolling. Men did not say: A religion, the doctrines of which are universalist and whose Deity is the One God, requires a universalist embodiment. The universalist spirit demands a universalist form. Therefore the outward presentation of Judaism must be modified and purified so that it may fit and harmonize with its essential and universalist dogmas. Nor did they say: Philosophy, criticism, and historical investigation no longer permit us to believe in the Mosaic origin, and in the absolute divine perfection and immutability of the Pentateuchal Code. Therefore, if Judaism is to survive, its legal basis, as hitherto conceived, must be abandoned. We must modify Judaism and reform it, both on its theoretic and its practical side, in order that we may make it less national upon the one hand and less legal upon the other.

The movement, as I say, began otherwise. It began as the consequence of the struggle for emancipation, and as a consequence of that struggle being at least partially successful.

The emancipation of the Jews was mainly the work or result of the French Revolution. The Jews said: We want to become citizens of the lands in which we dwell, where we have long dwelt, and where we hope and expect to dwell for a long while in the future. They demanded to be allowed to become members of every profession, to have rights as well as duties. With civic equality there soon went the demand for political equality as well. The Jews said: We are separated from the rest of our fellow-countrymen by our religion, but we are not separated from them by anything else. Their culture is our culture; their peace is our peace. We want to be one with them in all things except religion. We can be so at one with them,

for if in some religious doctrines we differ, there is much even in religion wherein we agree. Their ethical ideals and ours are essentially the same, and our conception of righteousness closely tallies with theirs. The divine Being is for both of us the source and condition of goodness: the moral law to which *we* pay allegiance differs rather in accent than in substance from theirs. We are no alien orientals, sojourning for a time among nations with whom we have no feelings, aims, and opinions in common. Though we may have come from the East, we are full-fledged Westerns now, occidentals in temper and in thought. To many minds in the nineteenth century the Jewish demand seemed just and right, and in many countries it was conceded. The demand, be it noted, fitted in with the temper of the time in two directions. First of all, the intenser and what I may almost call the virulent, nationalism of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was not yet active. There was not yet the bitter feeling of race, which has reacted with strange results upon Judaism itself. The idea of a single nation formed of many races was not tabooed. Each race did not vehemently desire to be a separate nation. Perhaps, too, there was less fear and dislike of the foreigner: more readiness to assimilate him and to let him assimilate. On the score, then, of race, there did not seem anything so unreasonable and dreadful in the idea that among the full citizens of, say, a predominantly Teutonic, or say, of a predominantly Latin, nation, there might be a small minority of men who were of a totally different, and that a Semitic, stock. They too could love the land of their birth and their adoption. They too could make good use of freedom. Let me interpolate one passing remark here, as I go forward. I trust that these views are not dead amongst us even now: I trust that they are, at least in England, still alive; I trust they are alive in Bradford, alive in the hearts of those I see before me this evening. But I pass on. The demand of the Jews for emancipation fitted in

also with theories of the separation of Church from State, or of the friendly relation of the State to more religions than one, which were attractive to, and maintained by, many thinkers and politicians. It was held that, even outside Christianity, there were religions which taught a fine and wholesome morality, and the members of which could safely be entrusted with municipal and political power. Some even went further, and thought that morality could be separated from religion altogether, and that the State should be organized upon a strictly secular basis.

The middle of the nineteenth century was the most favourable period for the fullest emancipation of the Jews. In Germany and England their demands met with wide recognition; in France they had even been recognized before. What the Jews asked for fitted in with the ideas of the time. The old feelings of contempt, the old kind of hatred, were dying out; there was an important lull; the new anti-Semitism, the new kind of hatred, was not yet born.

Do not think I have got off my track. For I now come to the effects of emancipation and the struggle for emancipation upon the Jews themselves. Or rather the religious effects, and these only in some lands and among some minds. In other lands and upon other minds the effect was a very gradual, but very perceptible and increasing divorce of the Jews from any participation or interest in their religion. As it was not liberalized, it decayed, and the number of educated and active adherents ominously waned.

But in some lands some Jewish minds began to think upon the relation of their religion to their own emancipation. They were not content to let it remain a mediaeval and museum curiosity, good enough for children and the uneducated, a pleasant memory of olden times, a family tradition, an institution of the hoary past; they wanted a living faith, and a religion in consistent relation with every other side and aspect of their lives. A beautifully preserved mummy, to be occasionally visited and occasionally admired, would not do.

They were Germans, let us say, for example, and they were also Jews. They were Germans of the Jewish faith. They were at one with their fellow-countrymen in all things except religion. Judaism, then, was a religion, and its laws were religious laws. If the German Jew had any national laws and customs which he must obey, these were the laws and customs of Germany. For his nation was Germany. One could not belong to two nations, own a double allegiance, at one and the same time. But surely many Jewish laws were national laws. Well, they were, at any rate, religious laws also, and if they were still observed and rightly observed, it was in virtue of their religious, and not in virtue of their national, character. The centre of gravity was fixed entirely on the religious-side of Judaism. A religious law, custom, or rite appealed; a merely national law, custom, or rite did not appeal. The one was alive and legitimately alive; the other did not any longer possess the constraining force of vitality.

But what about supernatural sanction? To the Liberalism which was the almost instinctive result of emancipation there had come as allies the critical and philosophic considerations which I mentioned before. Those who combined the full theory of emancipation with a still-convinced belief in the Mosaic origin, divine perfection, and immutability of the Mosaic law, had to make the best of the situation. They could still say: Every law we obey, or every rite we fulfil, is a religious law or a religious rite. We recognize none other. But further than this they could, or they can, not go. There could be for them no further adjustment or development. But the others, the young Liberals, went further; they went further in honesty, as the Orthodox stopped in honesty. They realized that the Law was not homogeneous or immutable; that it was, at any rate, not *all* Mosaic, and not *all* divine. They saw the human side as well as the divine. They felt the necessity of a religion, universalist in its doctrine, coming gradually to possess a universalist expression and form. A philosophic con-

ception of Judaism began to form itself in their minds. They held that each period of Judaism had its justification ; Judaism had developed, was developing, and would develop. It had gone through its formative, Biblical period, it had gone through the Rabbinic period, it was now at the threshold of another period still. An embodiment and outward form which suited a period of oppression were not the embodiment and form which suited the period of liberty. (Men's hearts beat high. They hoped for continued progress. They could not foresee the reaction that was to come.) Judaism had been a family religion ; it became a national religion ; but it was now to fit itself to become a universal religion.

The Rabbinic law had had its justification. Without it Judaism would not have survived the long night of persecution. But the dawn had come. The straitjacket of the oral, or even of the written, Law could be laid aside. For what was highest and greatest and truest and most essential in Judaism was the ethical monotheism of the Prophets. The Law itself was but the servant of this monotheism. God's Spirit did not come to men at one period only. His Spirit is with us now. And if we realize and declare that such and such laws are now obsolete, that they had but a temporary value and purpose, if we remove what for our age is moribund and useless—if we subtract here and add there, if we develop in our time, as our forefathers, with other needs, developed in theirs—if we too seek to maintain Judaism and to give to our religion a form more suited to its spirit, if we even purify doctrine as well as ceremony—we do not do all this from mere lust of change, and if we trust to our reason, it is because in that reason we humbly believe there is working still, as it worked in the reason of our ancestors, the guiding Spirit of God. It is not God's will, we believe, that Judaism should perish, but that it should develop and grow, grow in purity and grow in truth.

It was in this way, then, and from this combination

of reasons, that Liberal Judaism came into being. It attempted to separate the essential and the permanent from the accidental and the temporary. The attempt was arduous, but necessary; it was difficult, but wholly justifiable. It was not justifiable so long as men believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture and the Mosaic origin, divine perfection, and authoritative immutability of the Pentateuchal Code: it became justifiable and necessary when this pivot of orthodox Judaism was no longer sincerely and firmly adhered to. In this work of separation and purification the leading principles were to religionize and to universalize. As regards rites and ceremonies, these principles led some reformers too far. In their ardent enthusiasm they forgot that for most persons religion cannot dispense with an adequate number of ceremonies and rites, and they also forgot that such ceremonies and rites can be celebrated from more than one point of view. But their principles were reasonable. They tried to make Judaism safe, upon the theoretic side, from the results of historic investigation and from what would now be called the Higher Criticism. They also wanted to make it safe from and in harmony with the accepted conclusions of Science.

The ethical monotheism of the Prophets, the doctrine of Judaism concerning man and his relation to God, the doctrine of human progress towards perfection, could and should be detached from, and rendered independent of, the truth or error of miracles or the date of the Pentateuch. The reformers held and they boasted—I will not discuss the validity of the boast—that Judaism is less bound up with miracles and with the accuracy of the statements in particular books than is Christianity. Judaism, they asserted, was an historical religion; it had come into being, grown, developed, and would develop still further; it was an historical religion too in the sense that it had had a glorious and interesting history; but it was not an historical religion in the sense that any of its doctrines

depended upon alleged miraculous events or upon the accuracy of particular ancient records. It was an historical religion in the sense that one of its essential doctrines was what has been called the belief of God in history, and that another of those doctrines was the belief in the election of Israel for the performance of a given religious work for the benefit of mankind. It was not an historical religion in the sense that this belief in the election of Israel depended upon the belief that God himself "came down" (whatever such words may mean as applied to the Omnipresent Spirit) amid thunders and lightnings upon a mountain, and with his own voice uttered the Ten Commandments. And as regards the outward embodiment of the religion, the Liberal leaders desired to make it worthy and consistent with the universalism and purity of its doctrines. They held that the setting was for the sake of the doctrines, and had no independent and inviolable value of its own. It must be modified, with due regard to historical tradition and propriety (this proviso was not always adhered to), in accordance with the needs of the age and the environment. In an oriental country Judaism might rightly have a purely oriental setting. In the free countries of the West the oriental setting needed modification and change. Occidental Judaism required an occidental framework.

The watchwords of Liberal Judaism were progress and development. That which was right and good and true for the Jews of A.D. 500 or 1000, or even 1700, was not necessarily right and good and true for the Jews of to-day. That which had maintained Judaism for a thousand years might be strangling it to-day. Since Amos and Isaiah spoke there had indeed been progress and gain, but there had also been gathered some dross and some alloy. It was time to purify and time to advance. And so, with good hope and warm faith, they began their holy work of progress and purification.

I can say no more now as to the history of Liberal Judaism, and how it has fared, and Jews with it, in Ger-

many, America, and England. Perhaps, if I have not detained you too long, I may be allowed to say a few more words as to the character of Liberal Judaism in the present and as to its prospects for the future. I can only be exceedingly brief, and therefore am very likely to pay brevity's penalty, and be misleading or obscure.

I have told you that Liberal Judaism is an historical religion and seeks to maintain its hold upon, and relation towards, the past. It is not mere "Theism." But most Liberal Jews would, I think, maintain that not only the doctrines of their faith, but its rites and ceremonies too, while possessing a distinctively Jewish character, must ultimately all answer the following tests. They must be all religious and have religious value; that is to say, no rite can ultimately be maintained which is merely national and does not now possess, and cannot be made to possess, a definitely religious character. For instance, it is not religious to exclude instrumental music from the synagogue; it is not religious to say that a woman who has procured a divorce from her adulterous husband shall not be allowed to be re-married religiously, unless that husband choose to send her a Jewish bill of divorce; it is not religious to say that men and women may not sit together during divine worship; it is not religious to say that a man called Cohen may not marry a proselyte; it is not religious that public worship should necessarily be conducted exclusively in the Hebrew language; and so on. Take again the case of the dietary laws. Orthodox Judaism has made an immense deal of these laws; it has not merely rigorously adhered to the laws of the Pentateuch, but has added to them a number of Rabbinical laws as well. The orthodox Jew will not only not eat hare and pig and oyster, but he will not eat meat which has not been both killed and cooked in a particular way, and he will not eat meat and milk, or meat and butter, together. These dietary laws have played a very large part in the history of Judaism and have had very considerable effects both for good and

for evil. Liberal Judaism cannot see in these laws a divine command. It does not regard them as of God because they are in the Pentateuch ; it knows the history of these laws and their almost universal prevalence in all ancient religions. But if people choose to obey them, or to obey some of them—say the Biblical laws only, which do not really prevent social intercourse between Jew and Gentile—to obey them as a good exercise in self-denial or self-restraint, Liberal Judaism has no objection to offer. Each will do in this respect what seems right in his own eyes. It is a good thing that there should be in religious matters a field of free choice, where one can neither say that to abstain is in principle wrong or that not to abstain is in principle right.

A second test is that every doctrine and ceremony must be, so far as possible, not merely religious, but universally religious. For example: the festival of Passover is a national festival, but it can be charged not only with a religious, but even with a universal religious significance. Its interest is not merely local, tribal, temporary, or national. As the festival of freedom, and of the foundation of a great monotheistic religion, it has a universal significance. And a third test is that every doctrine and ceremony must be consistent with ethical monotheism itself—consistent with our highest conceptions of God and of his relations to man. The doctrine of the Chosen People is so consistent if it is interpreted to mean an Election for Service, and not an Election for Benefit; if it is interpreted to mean that all the races of men are equal in the eyes of God. And lastly, no doctrine or ceremony must violate the assured conclusions of history or of science.

It may be asked whether these tests have been easy or are capable of application to a religion so mixed up with the history of one race, and so riveted to a particular code, as Judaism. For seeing that for some two thousand years a main dogma of Judaism has been the Mosaic origin, divine perfection, and authoritative immutability of the

Pentateuchal code, and seeing that this dogma has so powerfully expressed itself in the worship and liturgy of the synagogue, it may legitimately be asked: How can Judaism continue when that dogma is abandoned? I admit that it is difficult. But what religion has not its difficulties? In religion, as in other matters, difficulties are to be met with struggle and conquest, not with repining and surrender. We Liberal Jews contend that the essential doctrines of Judaism are great and powerful and true enough to survive their detachment from temporary dogmas and conditions. We believe that they are cohesive and distinctive enough to justify the continuance of the religion which has taught and teaches them, and that even without the untenable dogma of the Mosaic and divine code, they can be given an adequate historical setting. We do not look askance at other Unitarian creeds; we welcome them as allies. But we hold that it is not even in the interests of the present Unitarian monotheism that we should not still continue to give to our monotheism an historic name and an historic setting. It is not in the interests of monotheism that we should not maintain our separateness and distinctiveness amid the other religions of the world. Liberal Judaism may rightly make the conditions for the admission of proselytes more easy and less material; it cannot accept without self-surrender—being a small minority amid big majorities—inter-marriage and coalescence. Judaism has still its work to do and its future in the religious development of mankind. That work and that future, as we Liberal Jews believe, can belong to Liberal Judaism alone. We look forward with faith; we look forward to a future which neither we nor our children shall live to see.

But I have not done with the difficulties of Liberal Judaism. More, and one of them the greatest of all, have yet to be mentioned.

The first is one which may be best put in the form of an objection from an outside critic. It is alleged that Liberal

Judaism may be all very well as a temporary religion for a few cultivated people, themselves the descendants, and possessing many of the inherited feelings, of orthodox Jews. It can never be a religion for the masses. It has no adequate appeal. It is alleged that the driving and moving power of the figure of Jesus Christ to Christianity is partly supplied in Judaism by the driving power of the Law. Devotion to the perfect and divine Law, on the one hand, an intense and even a narrow nationalism upon the other—these have maintained Judaism through the ages. It is precisely these motives which Liberal Judaism has destroyed, the one in obedience to the results of historical investigation, the other in the specious and fateful interests of a cheap religious universalism. To which criticisms I shall not reply. Both the so-called destructions have been wrought in the service of truth, and therefore in the service of religion. This is our driving power. Whither truth points, thither we must follow. We hold that Judaism is true enough and distinct enough to survive these destructions; our critics hold that it is not. Which of us is right, it is for the future to decide.

But now I come to the final difficulty, a difficulty which has indeed been just mentioned even now, for it is concerned with Jewish nationalism, but which has recently assumed a special and most complicated form.

Just as Liberal Judaism was partly the product of light and of outside environment, so the difficulty of which I have to speak is also partly, or mainly, the product of outside environment and of darkness. We saw how in the last century, between 1830 and 1870, the hopes of European Jews beat high. It seemed as if the age of prejudice and race hatred was passing away. Even in Russia, where the great majority of the Jews still reside, there were justified expectations. There, too, it seemed, till the assassination of Alexander II, as if the new era must dawn—the new era when the Russian Jews, who had lived for generations in Russia,

should become Russian citizens in fact and right, even as they desired.

But cruel has been the disappointment of our hopes. Ever since 1881 the condition of the Russian Jews has become steadily worse. Disability has succeeded to disability, oppression to oppression, pogrom to pogrom. And something more has happened, which in some ways is worse than the abominations of an Eastern despotism like Russia. There has risen up in Western Europe the dark spectre of anti-Semitism. A cruder nationalism has come into being, far bitterer and more earthy than the noble nationalism that helped to the formation of Italy. Germany is to be not only for the Germans, but for the Teutonic Germans. It is denied that men of alien blood and of another faith than Christianity can be Germans in thought, feeling, culture, and desire. Or at any rate, be they so or no, they shall be, in any case, tabooed, ostracized, and degraded. No Jew shall be an officer; no Jew shall be a civil servant; hardly a Jew shall be a professor; good society shall admit no Jews to their houses; if the odious race are to live in Germany at all, let them live apart, maligned, hated, and despised. Such is German and Austrian anti-Semitism, a movement which has, alas, spread, in one form or another, far beyond the confines of Germany. Even the Great Republic of the West has felt its influence; even there anti-Semitism has entered, and there are clubs where no Jew is admitted, schools where no Jewish child may enter, hotels where no Jew is allowed to pass the night.

I cannot here discuss the causes of anti-Semitism, or ask whether it is wholly the fault of so-called Christians, or whether Jews too have their share of blame. I simply record the facts in order to chronicle the results. For anti-Semitism has produced new parties in Judaism and a new cleavage. Or perhaps it would be more just to say that the new and cruder nationalism combined with anti-Semitism have produced these results. For, as I have

before remarked, the little Jewish world often faithfully reflects the larger outside world. That is the meaning of the proverb, "Every country has the Jews which it deserves," and of the old German saying, "Wie es christelt, so jüdet es." The movements which animate and pulsate through the bigger world are gradually felt in the smaller world as well. Unconsciously they are imitated. The fierce nationalism of German, Czech, Irishman, Magyar, or Russian has produced a revived, and, to my thinking, a retrograde nationalism among the Jews. Retrograde because it tends to set the hands of the religious clock backwards. The Jews, too, would fain become a nation: the conception of a religious community, scattered for a religious mission throughout the world, does not satisfy them any longer. The newer nationalism has awoke dormant Jewish and racial feelings among thousands to whom religion makes no appeal; the national life, they say, is not dead; the spirit in the dry bones is beginning to stir. Israel once more feels itself a nation, and seeks to become a nation, amid the other nations of the world. And this is not all. For so much might have come even without anti-Semitism, as the mere Jewish reflexion or echo of the newer chauvinistic nationalism. But anti-Semitism has increased this reflexion or echo a hundred and a thousand fold. For despair has seized upon many. Or, again, anti-Semitism is used to buttress up nationalism, and vice versa. Many Jews say: It is no good to hope for emancipation. The Jews will always be hated. If they are not hated in England, that is because they are still comparatively few in numbers. But look at the Aliens Bill, and give heed. We have tried long enough to be Germans, Austrians, Russians, Americans. The attempt is a failure, and will always be a failure, except in the case of a very few. Let them assimilate and remain, but let the majority form a nation for themselves, segregated apart in their own free land. Anti-Semitism is not a passing disease; it is a permanent malady to which

humanity has always been and always will be subject. And one more thing they say: Do you Liberals, they argue, want the Jews to remain scattered in other nations' lands, despised, oppressed, and ostracized, for the sake of their religion, for the sake of Judaism? But the more you emancipate, the more you destroy this religion on which you set so high a store. For the maintenance of Judaism depends upon the maintenance of the Sabbath. In modern life and modern conditions the immense majority of Jews must work upon Saturdays. You can neither transfer the Sabbath (for the attempt to do so has been a failure), nor can you observe it. Therefore Judaism, if all the Jews were emancipated to-morrow, and all anti-Semitism were miraculously to cease, must slowly but surely wither and die.

This, then, is the new and last difficulty which Liberal Judaism has to encounter. And I honestly tell you that it is not a difficulty which can be easily met or demolished with a few verbal arguments. Only indomitable faith in God, faith in our religion, and perhaps, too, faith in human nature, can enable us to overcome it.

But its effects upon Liberal Judaism must be briefly mentioned and enumerated. To begin with, the national movement in all its forms has tended to take men away, both as regards thought and deed, from religious concerns. The situation, they say, is too serious to allow us to waste time over details, over the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch, or the ritual of the synagogue, or the law of divorce. The life of "our people"—by which they mean not the English but the Jews—is at stake, and we cannot bother our heads with theories and trifles. These must wait, or they must settle themselves, as religious difficulties have a frequent habit of doing.

Then, too, the wave of nationalistic sentiment has affected many Liberal Jews. It has produced a fresh and cross cleavage, for among the warm supporters, and among the keen antagonists, of the national movement or move-

ments, there are many orthodox as well as several liberals. These liberal nationalists take different lines. Some say that the national movement can exist side by side with the liberal movement. The Jewish nation is one thing; the Jewish religion is another. There may well be a Jewish religion, as universal as you please, which men of many nations could adopt. The men of the Jewish nation need not necessarily be all members of one type of the Jewish religion, or even of the Jewish religion at all. The days of the coalescence and identity of nation and religion are over and gone. There may be Jews by faith who are not Jews by nationality, and Jews by nationality who are not Jews by faith.

This argument gives food for thought, but seems to project us too much into a distant and imaginary future. Other liberal nationalists, so far as they still interest themselves in religion and in Liberal Judaism, are inclined to modify the old universalist conceptions. They think that what we must look to is the present and not the very distant future. Judaism is, and, after all, for long must be, the religion of the Jews only. Let us take care, they say, lest in seeking to make it a universal religion, you either destroy it in the process or make it so unattractive to the Jews themselves that it will die of inanition. Many of the old ordinances and ceremonies which we can no longer obey or celebrate as the expression of the divine will, we may and should observe as national bonds charged with national sentiment. There is no reason why a national deliverance, such, for instance, as the Maccabean Feast of Dedication, should not also receive a religious consecration, and among the festivals which the purest liberalism would retain, there are some, such as the Passover, which have admittedly both a national and a religious significance. It is the distinctive feature of Judaism that to universalist dogmas it unites a keen national sentiment and picturesque national rites. It is a distinctive feature in it that religion and nationality are made to stimulate

each other ; the religion purifying the nationality, so that no possible feeling of false, chauvinistic or anti-alien nationalism can be aroused, and the nationality deepening the ardour and appeal of the religion. Why, they say, should this peculiar combination not be utilized? Why destroy it in order to create a sort of milk-and-water, abstract, colourless, cold and feeble Jewish Unitarianism?

How far Liberal Judaism may be affected in the future by these arguments it is impossible to say. Nor will I here discuss their validity. Those nationalists who remain keen generally as regards religion, or keen specially as regards liberal religion and Liberal Judaism, are our friends: to them, as to the anti-nationalists, Liberal Judaism is dear, and these as well as those proclaim themselves openly its advocates and adherents. Let each work for it in their own way.

Far more dangerous to the cause are they whom anti-Semitism and nationalism have, as it were, driven in upon themselves, and who seem to set more value upon the rites which separate than upon the great prophetic verities which unite. Far more dangerous are they who desire to soften and to mediate, to let sleeping dogs lie, to cling to the old as to a relic, or to throw a false glamour of poetry and romantic sentiment upon outworn conceptions and institutions. Most dangerous to the cause above all are those who either say, Believe what you like, but nevertheless observe rites though to you individually they have no meaning and no sanction; or who say, do what you like individually, but keep silence; in the presence of the foe without, let there be an appearance of peace within; let institutional and official Judaism continue, without rival and without criticism, however much the individual souls are starved, and however much they are alienated from Judaism, from religion, and from God.

Blurring of the outline; unclear thinking; slow stagnation; peaceful decay—none of these are favourable to the cause of liberal religion and of Liberal Judaism. But

I would not have you believe that my faith in the future of my religion has waxed cold, or that amid the many difficulties there are no signs of progress and reasons for hope. I am still an unabashed believer in human progress, and I am still unable to believe that anti-Semitism—born of race hatreds and religious prejudice—is a permanent attribute of mankind. For the rest, Liberal Judaism, like every other form of religion, is, I admit, upon its trial. Those who hold it to be true must believe in its ultimate victory, for part of its very doctrine is a faith in the ultimate triumph of truth. If it must die that its doctrines may live, live under other names and championed by wider organizations, that would be in itself no ignoble end. But be its victory through life or through death, the duty of those who now believe in it remains the same. The death of victory would be far other than the despair of suicide. So those who believe in it will still fight on, with hope and courage, towards the cherished, though distant goal.

C. G. MONTEFIORE.